



FORCE PRESERVATION- HIGH RISK BEHAVIOR & SUICIDE

18 July 2014

1. Force preservation is a vital element of being "**combat ready**". Engaged, perceptive leadership, at all levels, is the key to ensuring a command climate and level of trust needed to preserve our most precious assets- our Marines, Sailors, and their families. ALL of us must do ALL we can to ensure that our teammates or family members are not traveling down the road to disaster.
2. When faced with a tactical challenge, we seek to understand the context and environment first. In terms of our environment, we are often under significant stress by virtue of our role in an operational infantry unit and we are often far from our loved ones and family. In terms of high risk behavior and suicide, there is also some context that can assist us. Common characteristics for suicides include the loss of a significant relationship or a threat to one's career. Drug and alcohol abuse are often contributing factors. In almost every instance of suicide there are outward signs of inward turmoil first- and these signs usually appear in observable behaviors such as diminished performance, misconduct, withdrawal, isolation, and high risk behavior.
3. As Infantry Marines, we are exposed to risk often. We usually enjoy it. There is a fine line, however, when it comes to taking excessive or needless risk- whether in the line of duty or not- as it pertains to our combat readiness. Behaviors such as riding a motorcycle in an unsafe condition or without personal protective equipment, speeding, not wearing seat belts, jumping from cliffs into water, pushing Marines beyond their capabilities, binge drinking, drug use, risky personal relationships, etc. - **put you AND YOUR TEAMMATES as great risk**. Losing even one Marine to injury, death, incarceration, HIV, etc. has a disproportionate effect on the readiness, morale, and integrity of this entire team. It also affects your families.
4. We charge all of you to be engaged and display a genuine concern for the well-being and safety of your teammates and their families. Knowing your people means to also know their family background to include whether or not they come from broken homes or have a history of suicide in their families. We expect our leaders to have a candid discussion with their men when they notice a change in demeanor, behavior, or performance, regardless of their rank, status, or level of mental and emotional stability. We expect our Marines and Sailors to apply this same process with their family members at home.
5. Never hesitate to raise your concerns up through the chain of command. This is nothing more than watching out for each other and ensuring that we are "combat ready"- hallmarks of our ethos. **DO NOT WAIT TO ACT ON YOUR SENSING AND INSTINCTS that something is not right with a teammate.** In the case of suicidal feelings, ideations, or suspicions, contact the DNCO or OOD and they'll help you take care of your teammate by executing our battle drill. **Medical personnel must evaluate that individual immediately before he can be left alone.** **DO NOT LEAVE HIM ALONE UNTIL RELIEVED BY THE DUTY OR BY MEDICAL PERSONNEL. IN THE CASE OF A SUICIDE ATTEMPT - CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY.**
6. Be engaged and display genuine concern for the well-being of your men and their families. All of you should consider yourselves "guardian angels" in overwatch of each other. Take care of your teammates.

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